
The Communication of Sin:

Sach. 14/2(1)

A

SERMON

PREACH'D at the

Affizes held at *DERBY*,

AUGUST 15th, 1709.

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Publish'd at the Request of the Gentlemen of the
GRAND-JURY.

L O N D O N :

Printed for *HENRY CLEMENTS*, at the *Half-
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To the Right Worshipful
George Sacheverell, Esq;

High-Sheriff of the County of *DERBY*, and to
the Honourable Gentlemen of the *Grand-Jury*.

GENTLEMEN,

THE Peculiar Honour you were pleas'd to confer upon me after the Delivery of this plain Discourse, was so Signal, that nothing less than this Publick Acknowledgment can acquit me of Ingratitude.

Now, when the Principles, and Interests of our Church, and Constitution, are so shamefully Betray'd, and Run Down, it can be no little Comfort to all those who Wish their Welfare and Security, to see, that notwithstanding the secret Malice, and Open Violence they are Persecuted with, there are still to be found such Worthy Patrons of both, who dare Own and Defend them as well against the Rude and Presumptuous Insults of the One Side, as the Base, Undermining Treachery of the Other; and who Scorn to sit Silently by, and Partake in the Sins of these Associated Malignants.

Tho' the Truth seems to be so much Forsaken at present, yet God be thank'd, they shall yet find to our Honour, that We have still amongst Us those who have Courage to Speak it, as well as those who have Lives and Fortunes to Maintain it: And tho' the Age is sunk into the Lowest Dregs of Corruption, that it cannot endure Sound Doctrine, there are not wanting Some to Preach it, and Others to Support it, at the Expence of Both. May the Influence of your Good Examples, which as much Animates our Friends, as it Terrifies our Enemies, be as diffusively Prevailing, as 'tis nobly Conspicuous; and the Blessing of that Church attend you, which you so eminent-ly Adorn, and Sustain!

And, as I am oblig'd by the Relation I have the Honour to bear to your Family, may a double Portion of Divine Favour rest on you. (Mr. HIGH-SHERIFF) whose Commands I was very ready to Execute in this Office, since you thought neither the Advancement of your Years, so generously Expended for the Good of your Country, nor the great Trouble attending this Post, sufficient to exempt you, from shewing that steady Loyalty and Zeal to serve Her Majesty and the Government, for which you have been remarkably Distinguished.

I am, with all Regard, Gentlemen,

B  L

Your very Humble Servant,

HENRY SACHEVERELL

TIM. 5. Part of the 22d Verse.

Neither be Partaker of other Men's Sins.

WHEN St. Paul, by the peculiar Designation of the Holy Ghost, had Ordain'd *Timothy* Bishop of *Ephesus*, that he might not be wanting in sufficient Instructions for the Discharge of so Weighty and Sacred an Office, he sends him in this *Epistle* the Credentials of his Authority, with those Rules of Government for himself in his Private Life, together with those Canons of Ecclesiastical Discipline, which were absolutely necessary for the Publick due Administration of the Church of God. And to excite in him a full Sense of his Duty, and the great Danger of Neglecting or Abusing his High-Calling, the Apostle charges him before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Elect Angels, to consider that a double Burthen lay upon him, that he must answer for the Loss of all those other Souls committed to his Care at the Expence of his own; that he must be Responsible for their Guilt and Miscarriage, as his own proper Crimes; and that therefore he should act with all the strictest Vigilance and Circumspection in so momentous a Concern, and lay hands suddenly on no Man: Which, whether understood of Absolution of Penitents, by that Ancient and Primitive Ceremony us'd in it, (as some Writers contend) or of Ordination, (as others) would involve him in all the ill Consequences of such a Rash and Precipitate Action, and make him Partaker of other Men's Sins.

The Words however may be taken in an unrestrain'd Sense, as an excellent Maxim for the Conduct of Human Life in General; or as an Universal Prohibition of Contributing towards, Concurring, or Complying with, the wicked Practices of others, lest as we thereby become Accomplices in their Iniquity, we may be also Sharers in their Guilt, and Fellow-Sufferers in their Punishment. Under which unlimited Acceptation I shall proceed to discourse on the Text, and shall endeavour to shew,

I. First, How many Ways we may be Partakers of other Men's Sins; And,

II. Secondly, I will urge some particular Motives to deter us from falling under so great and dangerous a Guilt.

I. And First, I will shew how many Ways we may be Partakers of other Men's Sins. In order to the stating this Point clearly, I must beg leave to premise this Reflection, That all Immoral Actions may be consider'd under a double View, and consequently divided into two Sorts. Either first, such as are Internal, and Personal; or secondly, such as are External, and Derivative. Now as the First are confin'd within the Offender, and transacted only betwixt God and our Consciences; so they extend their Guilt no farther than the Man, and are circumscrib'd within the Bounds of his own Soul. These Sins are of a restrain'd and Positive Nature, and to be measur'd by their Essential, and Intrinsic Malignity alone. But the Others have, besides this, a Relative Addition of Guilt, drawn from all the mischievous Effects, and wicked Consequences that flow from them; according

to which they rise in proportion of Impiety, increase in the Degrees of Heinousness, and Aggravation, and still gather as they are further propagated, and advanc'd. And as they are acted in Conjunction, in this Communion, and Society of Vice, (as I may call it) it grows fruitful, and multiplies; and tho' the Sin consider'd it it self may be Single, and Uncompounded, yet with respect to the Multitude engag'd in it, it may be also of a Complicated Nature, as it's communicated Influence is transfus'd thro' several different Channels, which may all spring out of, run into, and joyn in *One Individual Body*. According to which Notion, any Criminal Action may distinguish all those that are *Confederate* in it's Commission, into these three several Classes; either first, as they are *Principal Agents* in it; or secondly, as they are *Accessories* to it; or thirdly, as they are *Privy* to it's Execution, by a *tacit Compliance* with it, wilful neglect of it, or *Omission* to prevent it. All which are to be consider'd as so many Gradations of Sin, charging the different Transgressor with an *Higher*, or *Lower* Imputation of Guilt, as he stands delinquent in either. But to render this Matter more fully evident, I will draw out; and exemplify these *General Heads*, in some of the most Important and Particular Cases contain'd under them, to which the rest may be easily reduc'd. We may therefore be *Partakers* of other Men's Sins, either by,

1. *Commanding*, or *Commissioning* their Execution.
2. *Conniving at*, *Consenting to*, or *Concealing* them.
3. *Administering Counsel*, *Direction*, or *Assistance* towards them.
4. *Commending*, *Approving*, *Excusing*, or *Defending* them.
5. *Giving Offence*, or *Scandalous Example*.
6. *Authorizing*, *Propagating*, or *Publishing* any *Heresy*, *False Doctrine*, *Schism*, *Faction*, *Irreligion*, or *Immorality*.

1. And First, We may partake of other Men's Sins, be *Commanding*, or *Commissioning* their Execution. This particularly respects all such as are invested with any *Jurisdiction*, or *Authority* over their *Inferiors*, all *Princes* and *Magistrates*, *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical*, *Masters* and *Governors*, *Parents* and *Guardians*, or any other that enjoy a *Right of Dominion* or *Discipline*, *Granted* and *Establish'd* by the Law, and a *Preeminence* requiring all *Allegiance* and *Subjection* to them in all things *Just* and *Honest*. Now tho' this *Sovereignty* is restrain'd within the *Rules of Justice* and *Equity*, of *Reason* and *Religion*, and no Power upon Earth can *Authorize*, *Justify* or *Excuse* the *Violation* of them, there lying a *Superior*, *Indefeasible* Obligation that *exempts* all Men from an *Illegal* or *Usurp'd* Obedience; yet the controlling Sway, and overbearing Awe of *Force* and *Authority*, the affrighting and almost irresistible Terrors of *Threats* and *Punishments*, the dazzling *Glory* of *Wealth* and *Grandeur*, together with the persuasive Influence of *Interest* and *Ambition*, make great *Allowance* for *Flesh* and *Blood*, not easily capable in it self, without the merciful *Assistances* of *Divine Grace*, to struggle with, and vanquish such pressing Difficulties and Temptations; and therefore charge back a double Portion of *Guilt* upon those Persons who abuse their *Dominion* to base and sinful Purposes, who in this Case are to be consider'd as the *Principal Authors* of these Evils, as the *Prime Cause* and *Original Ground-Spring* from whence they flow. Not that this Reflection of a *Greater Degree* of *Guilt* upon the *Commander*, can wholly acquit the *Subordinate Transactor* of his, who knows he is *Responsible* to a much *Greater Master* and *Sovereign*. He must share his Proportion, and

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at the Affizes at Derby.

bear his own Burden, tho' of much less Weight than that of his Superior. It is observable that the Roman Law inclin'd very much in favour to such unhappy Persons as lay under these Disadvantages of Power and Obligations, whereby they were obnoxious to be compell'd to execute, or comply with any Injunction that might contradict their Conscience, or interfere with their Justice and Integrity, imputing the Offence chiefly to those under whose Government they acted as the adequate and Impulsive Cause of the Crime, and true Object of the Penalty; esteeming the Immediate Delinquents to be properly *non sui Juris*, or capable Judges in the Case, and therefore not so much the Authors of Iniquity, as mere Passive Machines, directed by the Hands of Despotick and Overruling Managers. As doubtless the Strength of the Temptation, the Prevalence of Inducements, and the Want of Liberty, do very much Exonerate the Transgression in the One, so must it proportionably Aggravate that in the Other, in Perverting and Prostituting that Authority and Sacred Trust that was repos'd in him for the Promotion of Virtue and Piety, to the scandalous Propagation of Vice and Debauchery. Upon which Reasons are founded those several Maxims of the Civil Law, that Exempt all those that act under a Command from the Guilt of the Offence. And on the same account we find in the Scriptures many Instances of very flagrant Sins, committed by some Ministers of State, ascrib'd only to the Supreme Power, under whose Commission they Acted. A very Convincing Example whereof we read in the dismal Case of Uriah, whose Execrable Murther, tho' transacted by Joab thro' David's Order, was not only charg'd upon the King himself, in his own Words in his Penitential Psalm compos'd on that lamentable Occasion, but by the Holy Ghost also in the 2d of Samuel 12. 9. *Thou hast kill'd Uriah the Hittite with the Sword, and hast slain him with the Sword of the Children of Ammon.* Tho' doubtless his Subjects were Guilty of a very heinous Sin, in Obeying their Sovereign's impious Command; yet did God visit that abominable and ungrateful Fact upon the Prince's Head, in a Punishment that wore the Colour of his Crime, and branded his otherwise spotless Character with a Bloody Mark to all Posterity. And so was the Parallel Murther of Naboth both Ascrib'd to, and Expiated in the Persons of Ahab and Jezebel, who remain upon Record as Frightful and Infamous Examples of abus'd Power, Avarice and Usurpation. Where Princes thus presume to force the Consciences of their Subjects, and break in upon their Rights and Laws, not only their Private and Personal, but the Publick and National Crimes will be requir'd at their Hands; and for this reason the Idolatry of the Jews is charg'd upon Jeroboam, for which the Spirit of God has stigmatiz'd his Pedigree to Eternity, in that Odious and Reproachful Character of being the Son of Nebat that made Israel to Sin. When Aaron had so far submitted to the impious Request of the People as to Dethrone their God and Sovereign, and change their Glory into the Similitude of a Calf that eateth Hay, we find Moses accusing the High-Priest of their Rebellion and Idolatry, in this sharp Exposition, *What did this People* unto thee, *that thou hast brought so great a Sin upon them?* The Exod. 32. same Reason will be found to hold good in all Cases of Government, and Authority, which in the very lowest Degree are Offices of Commission, and Trust, lodg'd as the Delegacy, and Vice-Gerenty of God, the Fountain of all Power, in the Hands of Magistrates, and Superiors, who stand accountable to him for the Crimes of their Inferiors, in which they

are *Partakers*, and consequently will bear the Load of a double *Damnation*, when the Souls that are lost thro' their *Misconduct* are requir'd at their Hands.

II. *Secondly, We may be Partakers of other Men's Sins, by Conniving at, Consenting to, or Concealing them.* Now the *Guilt* in this Particular rises in proportion to the *Power*, and *Obligation*, that differently binds, or engages Men, according to the Variety of their *Circumstances*, and *Stations*, to prevent Vice, and Injustice. By that Rule is to be measur'd the *Bulk*, and *Extent* of the Sin; for where a Man has no *Power*, *Jurisdiction*, or *Obligation* to exert that *Power*, there can be no *Communication* of the Action: But where we are invested in such *Authority*, as in the Case of all *Publick Offices*, and *Administrations*, or where the *Præcepts* of *Humanity*, *Civil Justice* or *Religion* require us to interpose, and restrain the Commission of any vicious Act, either thro' *Carelessness*, and *Negligence*, *Partiality*, or *Impunity* in the One, *Connivance*, *Consent*, or *Concealment* in the Other, they both become *Partakers* of the Crimes committed, in an unfaithful Discharge of their Duties, and a *Tacit Violation* of their Trust, and are not only Responsible for the present Acts alone, but also for all the mischievous *Consequences* attending them. For *vicious Customs* steal upon us gradually, and by every fresh Advancement get Ground and Strength, till at last by many multiply'd Acts they establish themselves, grow Head-strong, Irresistable, and out of the reach of *Controul* or *Correction*, which the least *Discipline* seasonably apply'd to, in a State of *Infirmity*, had check'd and suppress'd in their very Birth. *Errors in Practice* being like *Absurdities in Reasoning*, the Admission of *One Fallacy* will draw a *Thousand* after it. *Neglect*, and want of *Animadversion*, make Delinquents Bold and Impudent, and will bring 'em from *Extenuating*, to *Justifying* their Faults.

A *Tacit Admission* in any One that has the *Right* of *Prohibition*, amounts to an *Approbation* of any thing in the Sense of the whole World, and involves the Person so *Consenting* under a double *Guilt*, both as being a *Party* concern'd in the Sin, and as a *Traitor* of his Authority. Silence where a Man ought to speak, is as *Culpable*, if not more than an *Actual*, and open *Engagement*. *These Things hast thou done, and I held* Psal. 50. 21. *my Tongue, and thou thoughtest that I was even such an one as thy self*, says the *Psalmist*, and the *Natural Inference* most Men are apt to draw from the *Cowardly Compliance*, and base *Obsequiousness* of such as ought to shew their *Power*, and *Principles* to the contrary. He that does not appear in opposition to that which it is his Duty to prevent, or suppress, must at the least justly be concluded not to be against it, according to that *Aphorism* of our *Blessed Saviour*, Mar. 9. 40. *He that is not against us, is on our part*, which indeed may bear a further Interpretation, that the Man that acts not evidently against any *Party*, or *Design*, is a real *Promoter*, or *Encourager* of it's Interest. For certainly any Person in *Authority* does much more contribute to the *Advancement* of Evil by a *Permissive Silence*, and *Passive Forbearance*, than an *Inferior* can in the most vigorous Expression of his *Zeal*, and *Fervency* for it; because by him Vice seems to be *Legitimated*, as 'twere *Establish'd by Law*, and to have its currant *Passport* without *Controul* in the World. Thus does he that *Acquiesces in*, *Submits to*, or *Winks* as a Crime that by his *Post* and *Power* he is qualify'd to *Forbid*, Prevents.

Prevent, Redress, or Correct, become positively Guilty of that very Crime himself, as much as if he had been the *Single, and Personal Aggressor*. Both the *Old and New Testament* abounding with pregnant Examples for the Proof of this Assertion, I shall trouble you with but two drawn out of each, which speak very home to the purpose. The First is that Remarkable, and Notorious Case of old *Eli*, under the joyn't Consideration both of a *Parent, and Magistrate*. He, like a *1 Sam. 1. 20, &c.* too Indulgent *Father, and Governor*, conniv'd at the abominable Transgressions of the *Priests* his *Sons*, who, by turning the very *Temple* into a *Brotel-House*, had made the Sacrifice of the Lord to stink, and his Service Detestable in the sight of the People, and when he ought to have Purg'd the *Church* of such *Sanctify'd Villainy*, and Executed the severest Punishments that Justice could inflict upon such Hellish Crimes, and as 'twere to have *Reconcil'd* God to his *Altar*, by the Effusion of his own *Guilty Blood* upon it, he could not find in his Heart to give them so much as a Rebuke, till the Clamours, and Outcries of the People forc'd him to that Ungrateful Office. And even then too his Corrections were so Soft, and Gentle, so full of silly Fondness, and Dotage, that they rather *Encourag'd*, than *Restrain'd* their Odious Impieties. High time was it for God to awake, when his Listless *Tawning Vice-Gerons* was thus scandalously *Drowsy*, to vindicate that crying *Reproach* he had brought upon his *Worship, and Honour* by such Supine Oscitancy, Sloth and Negligence. Accordingly we find God charging all these monstrous Sins upon the *Old Prophet*, with the highest Exprobation of the blackest *Ingratitude, and Injustice*, spurning the useless and unworthy *Dotard* out of his Office, and executing Vengeance upon him, and his whole Posterity, with the utmost Indignation and Disdain.

§. The other Instance we have Recorded by *St. Paul*, in his First Epistle to the *Corinthians*, c. 5. wherein he very sharply charges his new Converts as *Partakers* in the foul Sin of the *Incestuous Person*, because they *Conniv'd* at it, and did not positively proceed to Execute the *Church-Censures* upon him, in totally cutting off such a Corrupt and Rotten Member from its Body. *Ye are puff'd up*, (says he) *and have not rather mourn'd, that he that hath done this Deed might be taken away from among you.* For the Understanding whereof, we must observe that in the *Primitive Ages* of *Christianity*, Excommunication denoted by these Expressions, *ἐξαιρέσεις ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν*, and *ἐξομολογήσιν τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικῆς*, being never us'd, but on very great and enormous Occasions; and being justly esteem'd of such a Dreadful and Damnable Consequence, was always attended with the sad Pomp, and mournful Solemnities of a *Funeral*; the *Congregation* were array'd in *Black*, accompanying the *Execution* with Lamentation, and loud Weeping, as o'er the *Spiritual Death* of the Criminal's Soul. So that the *Apostle* here expostulates with the *Corinthians*, as *Encouraging, and Sbar-ing* in the Vice, in *Omitting* to Punish it, tho' in such a Severe and Desperate way, wherein *Mercy, and Compassion* might be allow'd to take place if in any Case in the World.

Thus the *Toleration* of any Sin in *Others* by Persons of *Power, and Authority*, *Translates* it back on their own Heads, and renders them actually Guilty of it. This Assertion must be allow'd *Evident* and *Undeniable* in all Instances of *Government*; but then there arises a fresh *Question*, How far we may be *Partakers* of other Men's Sins in the *Private Intercourse* and

Affairs of Human Life between Man and Man, in Common Conversation? We are certainly oblig'd in *Charity* to bear always an hearty and tender

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Rom. 14. Occasion serves, or we have opportunity of Maintaining and
19. Ec. Propagating the great Interest of Truth, Piety, and Virtue

in the World. But on the other hand, do not the same express Injunctions of *Charity, Religion, and Justice* oblige us with equal Force, and Penalty, to the no less necessary Duties of *Peace, and Quietness, Forbearance, and Forgiveness*, in Mercy, Compassion, and Good-Nature to Cover, and Conceal, our Brother's Sins, and Infirmities? Do not these as strictly command us not to thrust ourselves *Pragmatically* into his Business, or meddle with those Concerns that do not belong to us, or under the *Sanctify'd Pretence* of Reformation of Manners, to turn *Informer*, assume an Odious and Faction Office, arrogantly intrench upon Other's *Christian Liberty*, and Innocence, and under the Shew of more Zeal, and Purity, (the most infallible Token of a *Dextrous and Refin'd Hypocrite*, and *Knave*) turn the World upside down, and set all Mankind into Quarrels, and Confusions? Now to Reconcile these Differences, and to Steer our Course even between the Limits of *Duty and Error*, which indeed is not so easy a Matter precisely in all Instances to do, these three Conclusions may help to solve most of the Difficulties in the Case before us.

1. First, We maybe Partakers of other Men's Sins, if we do not endeavour to the utmost of our Power, to prevent, or stop their Commission, when they openly break in upon Religion, or assault the Glory of God. In this Case we lie under a Double Obligation to interpose, in Vindication of the Divine Honour, and for the Eternal Salvation of our Brother; both which ought to be more Dear to us, than any other Considerations in the World. When we hear God's Holy and Dreadful Name Blasphem'd, his Being Deny'd, his Providence Arraign'd, his Goodness Censur'd, his Power Condemn'd, his Justice Question'd, his Mercy Mock'd, the Sacred Mysteries of our Faith Vilify'd or Ridicul'd, not to stand up in their Defence, and with all the Courage, Authority, and Argument we are Masters of to assert the Glorious Cause of God and Truth, is to Renounce our Allegiance to One, and Preventions to the Other. In such base, and cowardly Disloyalty to God, Silence and Connivance make us Actual Aggressors; not to Speak, is to Approve; not to Act, is to Commit; not to Rebuke, is to Consent to; not to shew our Displeasure against, is to have Complacency in it; not to Resist, is to Submit to it; not to endeavour to Destroy, is to Promote the Kingdom of the Devil, and to Side with the Powers of Darkness. There is no Trimming Moderation in this Case, no standing in a Neutrality and Indifference, we must be Offensive or Defensive, and serve God, or Belial. This is a Negative Denial of God, (if I may so speak) and communicates a deep share of the Guilt; but how much greater then does a Positive derive? When Men out of a Time-serving Fear, Scycophantizing Flattery, or mistaken Complaisance, shall fall in with the Damnable Humours, or Debauch'd Opinions of Lewd Sots, and Atheists, smile at their Smutty and Prophane Jest, tamely hear those Holy Oracles, by which we expect to be Sav'd Scoff at and Derided, and impudently Criticis'd upon, and

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give an approving Laugh to that Excellent Drollery, for which the Speaker's Tongue ought to be cut out, lest they should displease a Crew of Ignorant and Profligate Infidels, by shewing unseasonably before Brutes and Buffoons, that they themselves are Men, that is, Creatures, endu'd with Reason, and Reflection, that are not ashamed of the God that made them, and have so much Gratitude as to Own and Vindicate the Saviour that Redeem'd them. Not to Rebuke such Daring Impieties, (which fly in the Face of Heaven, and call aloud for speedy Vengeance, for Thunder and Earthquakes to Blast and swallow such accursed Miscreants, who thus provoke, and as 'twere anticipate their Damnation) notwithstanding the most powerful and dangerous Oppositions in Eph. 5. 11. the World, is, in the Apostle's Language, to have Fellowship with the Works of Darkness, to associate with Devils Incarnate, and to enter into a Covenant with Death, and an Agreement with Hell, as the Prophet elegantly speaks, which such treacherous Apostates to their Religion, will at last, to their Eternal Sorrow, find their just Reward hereafter.

2. Secondly, We may be Partakers of other Men's Sins, if we do not to the utmost of our Power, endeavour to prevent, or obstruct their Commission, when they manifestly endanger the Good of the Publick. As we are Members of the Government, or Society, we are All oblig'd, in point of Honour, Interest, and Conscience, to Maintain its Security, Promote its Welfare, and Guard it against any Faction's Designs, or Seditious Conspiracies, that may threaten it's Constitution, discompose it's Peace, or Violate and Subvert it's Laws. God, and Nature, has invested every Subject from his Cradle, with a Commission to Engage, Discover, and Disappoint the Enemies of his Church, and Country; and he that is either Privy to, industriously Conceals, or any ways Abets, their Schismatical, Illegal, or Rebellious Enterprizes, both in the Eyes of Humankind, as well as Divine Laws, is an Accomplice, and Partaker in the Guilt, a Traitor to God and his Prince, a Patron and Protector of Injustice, and a Common Adversary to Himself, as well as all Mankind.

3. Thirdly, We may partake in other Men's Sins, by Conniving at, or Consenting to, any imminent Danger, or great Injury, that may violently affect the Body, or Soul, the Life, or Estate, Spiritual, or Temporal, of our Neighbour. Where these visibly lie at stake, they demand our Succours, and Common Humanity interests us in their Defense. Where his Innocent Reputation is scandalously Aspers'd, his naked Person openly Assaulted, or Assassinated, his Fortune secretly Struck at, or Undermin'd, every Man is bound to follow the Example of that Heroic Champion, and Deliverer of his Country-men, Moses, who tho' endow'd with such an Unparallel'd Meekness, as nothing but such an heinous Provocation could disturb, Seeing one of his Brethren suffering wrong, Defended him, and Aveng'd him that was oppress'd, and smote the Egyptian. Otherwise we lie obnoxious to the imputation of the Psalmist, When thou sawst a Thief, thou consentedst unto him, and hast been Partaker with the Adulterers. He must at least be suppos'd Psal. 50. 18. a Well-wisher to the Villainy, that can behold it's Commission without Compassion, and Resentment. St. Paul's meer standing by, and holding the Garments of St. Stephen's Executioners, was enough to have Aainted the Apostle, and render'd him Guilty of the Martyr's Blood. Now if barely viewing the Perpetration of a Corporal Crime in Others,

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 in the World. But on the other hand, do not the same express

Injunctions of *Charity, Religion, and Justice* oblige us with equal Force, and Penalty, to the no less necessary Duties of *Peace, and Quietness, Forbearance, and Forgiveness*, in Mercy, Compassion, and Good-Nature to Cover, and Conceal, our Brother's Sins, and Infirmities? Do not these as strictly command us not to thrust ourselves *Pragmatically* into his Business, or meddle with those Concerns that do not belong to us, or under the *Sanctify'd Pretence* of Reformation of Manners, to turn *Informers*, assume an Odious and Faction Office, arrogantly intrench upon Other's *Christian Liberty*, and Innocence, and under the Shew of more Zeal, and Purity, (the most infallible Token of a *Dextrous and Refin'd Hypocrite*, and *Knave*) turn the World upside down, and set all Mankind into Quarrels, and Confusions? Now to Reconcile these Differences, and to Steer our Course even between the Limits of *Duty and Error*, which indeed is not so easy a Matter precisely in all Instances to do, these three Conclusions may help to solve most of the Difficulties in the Case before us.

1. First, We maybe Partakers of other Men's Sins, if we do not endeavour to the utmost of our Power, to prevent, or stop their Commission, when they openly break in upon Religion, or assault the Glory of God. In this Case we lie under a Double Obligation to interpose, in Vindication of the Divine Honour, and for the Eternal Salvation of our Brother; both which ought to be more Dear to us, than any other Considerations in the World. When we hear God's Holy and Dreadful Name Blasphem'd, his Being Deny'd, his Providence Arraign'd, his Goodness Censur'd, his Power Contemn'd, his Justice Question'd, his Mercy Mock'd, the Sacred Mysteries of our Faith Vilify'd or Ridicul'd, not to stand up in their Defence, and with all the Courage, Authority, and Argument we are Masters of to assert the Glorious Cause of God and Truth, is to Renounce our Allegiance to One, and Preventions to the Other. In such base, and cowardly *Disloyalty* to God, Silence and Connivance make us Actual Aggressors; not to Speak, is to Approve; not to Act, is to Commit; not to Rebuke, is to Consent to; not to shew our Displeasure against, is to have Complacency in it; not to Resist, is to Submit to it; not to endeavour to Destroy, is to Promote the Kingdom of the Devil, and to Side with the Powers of Darkness. There is no Trimming Moderation in this Case, no standing in a Neutrality and Indifference, we must be Offensive or Defensive, and serve God, or Belial. This is a Negative Denial of God, (if I may so speak) and communicates a deep share of the Guilt; but how much greater then does a Positive derive? When Men out of a Time-serving Fear, Scycophantizing Flattery, or mistaken Complaisance, shall fall in with the Damnable Humours, or Debauch'd Opinions of Lewd Sots, and Atheists, smile at their Smutty and Prophane Jest, tamely hear those Holy Oracles, by which we expect to be Sav'd Scoff at and Derided, and impudently Criticis'd upon, and

give

give an approving Laugh to that Excellent Drollery, for which the Speaker's Tongue ought to be cut out, lest they should displease a Crew of Ignorant and Profligate Infidels, by shewing unseasonably before Brutes and Buffoons, that they themselves are Men, that is, Creatures, endu'd with Reason, and Reflection, that are not ashamed of the God that made them, and have so much Gratitude as to Own and Vindicate the Saviour that Redeem'd them. Not to Rebuke such Daring Impieties, (which fly in the Face of Heaven, and call aloud for speedy Vengeance, for Thunder and Earthquakes to Blast and swallow such accursed Miscreants, who thus provoke, and as 'twere anticipate their Damnation) notwithstanding the most powerful and dangerous Oppositions in *Eph. 5. 11.* the World, is, in the Apostle's Language, to have Fellowship with the Works of Darkneſs, to associate with Devils Incarnate, and to enter into a Covenant with Death, and an Agreement with Hell, as the Prophet elegantly speaks, which such treacherous Apostates to their Religion, will at last, to their Eternal Sorrow, find their just Reward hereafter.

2. Secondly, We may be Partakers of other Men's Sins, if we do not to the utmost of our Power, endeavour to prevent, or obstruct their Commission, when they manifestly endanger the Good of the Publick. As we are Members of the Government, or Society, we are All oblig'd, in point of Honour, Interest, and Conscience, to Maintain its Security, Promote its Welfare, and Guard it against any Faction's Designs, or Seditious Conspiracies, that may threaten it's Constitution, discompose it's Peace, or Violate and Subvert it's Laws. God, and Nature, has invested every Subject from his Cradle, with a Commission to Engage, Discover, and Disappoint the Enemies of his Church, and Country; and he that is either Privy to, industriously Conceals, or any ways Abets, their Schismatical, Illegal, or Rebellious Enterprizes, both in the Eyes of Human, as well as Divine Laws, is an Accomplice, and Partaker in the Guilt, a Traitor to God and his Prince, a Patron and Protector of Injustice, and a Common Adversary to Himself, as well as all Mankind.

3. Thirdly, We may partake in other Men's Sins, by Conniving at, or Consenting to, any imminent Danger, or great Injury, that may violently affect the Body, or Soul, the Life, or Estate, Spiritual, or Temporal, of our Neighbour. Where these visibly lie at stake, they demand our Succours, and Common Humanity interests us in their Defense. Where his Innocent Reputation is scandalously Aspers'd, his naked Person openly Assaulted, or Assassinated, his Fortune secretly Struck at, or Undermin'd, every Man is bound to follow the Example of that Heroic Champion, and Deliverer of his Country-men, Moses, who tho' endow'd with such an Unparallel'd Meekness, as nothing but such an heinous Provocation could disturb, Seeing one of his Brethren suffering wrong, Defended him, and Aveng'd him that was oppress'd, and smote the Egyptian. Otherwise we lie obnoxious to the imputation of the Psalmist, *When thou sawst a Thief, thou consentedst unto him, and hast been Partaker with the Adulterers.* He must at least be suppos'd *Psal. 50. 18.* a Well-wisher to the Villainy, that can behold it's Commission without Compassion, and Resentment. St. Paul's meer standing by, and holding the Garments of St. Stephen's Executioners, was enough to have Awaiting the Apostle, and render'd him Guilty of the Martyr's Blood. Now if barely viewing the Perpetration of a Corporal Crime in Others,

when we can *obstruct* it, may make us *Malefactors* our selves, certainly the *Permission* of a *Spiritual* much more, as 'tis of a more dreadful Consequence to the *Better Part* of Man. To prevent which, we are oblig'd to interpose with the most *Fraternal Concern*, gentle *Admonition*, tender *Reproof*, kind *Advice*, and insinuating *Persuasions*, still with a cautious and due Consideration of *Time*, of *Place*, and of *Person*. But if these *Friendly Overtures* cannot prevail, we have wash'd our *Hands* of the *Guilt*, and stand acquitted before *God*, and our *Conscience*; but

Lev. 19. 17. without them, we are positively said even in the *Mosaic Law*, to suffer *Sin* upon him, and consequently liable to partake of the *Penalty*. But however we must strictly observe, that these *Duties* are always confin'd to *Overt Acts*, and *Visible Cases*; for *Religion* has left in this Matter, a wide Room for the right Exercise of our *Prudence*, and *Discretion*; for it does not oblige to charge Men at random; upon bare *Surmise*, and *Suspicion*, or to pry officiously into their *Lives*, and *secret Affairs*, and to invade their *private Rights*, by usurping a *Jurisdiction*, which we have no title to justify, or with a rude Air of *Superiority*, to obtrude our selves upon 'em as *Privy Counsellors*, and *Dogmatically Censure*, *Rebuke*, or *Advise* in our Neighbour's Proceedings, that don't belong to us, neither lie under the Verge of our Cognizance. Whatever *Godly*, and fallacious *Glosses* such troublesome *Wasps*, that erect into *Illegal Inquisitions*, may cast upon their Actions, they are doubtless the unwarrantable Effects of an *Idle*, *Incroaching*, *Impertinent*, and *Medling Curiosity*, a Vice as contrary to the true, *Generous Spirit* of *Christianity*, as 'tis to *Good-Manners*, and *Justice*. It is in short the base Product of *Ill-Nature*, *Spiritual Pride*, *Censoriousness*, and *Sanctify'd Spleen*, pretending to carry on the Blessed Work of *Reformation* by *Lying*, *Slandring*, *Whispering*, *Backbiting*, and *Tale-bearing*, the most express Character of the *Devil*, who is *Emphatically styl'd* the *Grand Accuser* of the *Brethren*. No wonder therefore, that *St. Paul* has so severely stigmatiz'd these *Busy-Bodies* in other Men's Matters, these *Αλλοεμπνομοι* that presume to exercise the *Office*, and *Discipline* of a *Bishop* in other Men's *Provinces* (as the *Original* may be render'd) whom he justly ranks with *Murderers*, *Thieves*, and *Malefactors*, *1 Pet. 4. 15.* as the most proper Persons to keep one another Company,

III. I come now to the *Third General Head* propos'd, namely, that *We* may partake in other Men's Sins, by administering *Counsel*, *Direction*, or *Assistance* towards them. It is almost impossible that any *Great Act* of *Villany* should be carry'd on, and accomplish'd by any *One Single Person*; there must be *Co-operators*, *Partners*, and *Under-workers* in it, who like the several *Actors* in a well-form'd *Tragedy*, must contribute their various *Parts* to the main *Body* of the *Action*, and all *Conspire* and *Unite* in the *Fatal Catastrophe*. Few Men, tho' of the most exalted *Genius*, *Reach*, and *Depth*, have in themselves, either *Heads* or *Hearts* sufficient, *Power*, *Conduct*, or *Policy*, to *Contrive*, *Manage*, and *Compleat* an *Elaborate* and *Consummate Piece* of *Sin*, a *Sin* of *Bulk*, *Figure*, and *Extent*: There must be many *Hands* employ'd, many *Confederates* let into, and trusted with the *Secret*, any *One* whereof *Miscarrying*, may endanger the *Best-projected Plot* in *Nature*. Therefore the *Grand Deceiver* of *Mankind* is careful to pick out his *Privy Council*, men of shew'd *Dexterity* and *Cunning*, well vers'd in all his *Artificial Wiles*, and *subtile Stratagems*, that with *fair Countenances*, and *smooth Tongues*, can *Hypocritically Blanch*, and

Palliate

Palliate the most Odious, and Deform'd Iniquities, and slyly insinuate them into the Weak and Undiscerning. Absalom must have his Achitophel, Job his Bosom-Serpent, his Wife, Judas his Sanbedrim; that under the sacred, and endearing Pretence of Friendship, for the Gratification of their Ambition, Pleasure, or Avarice, must persuade the One to Rebel, entice the Other to Renounce his God, and Bribe, the Third to Betray his very Saviour. Now certainly these Agents, and Solicitors in the Devil's Cause, who Advise, Direct, or Promote it, are to be consider'd not only as the Allies, but as principal Sharers in the Sin, whether they bring about their Designs by skilfully applying to the Humours, Affections, or Interests of the Person Betray'd, or by Importunity, and the winning Charms of Address, enforc'd by proper Arguments, Objects, and Occasions to Catch, and Insinuate an Unguarded Heart. Nay further, he that thus Inveigles any Person, and Seduces him against the Reluctance of his Conscience, by Menaces, or Sollicitations, must be concluded under a deeper Imputation of Guilt, than the very Actor himself, as those Words of our Saviour seem positively to infer, as 'twere a little in Excuse of that Corrupt, and Self-condem'd Judge, Pontius Pilate, overborn by the Clamours and Outrage of the tumultuous Jews, into the most Villainous, most Execrable Sentence, upon the Justest, and Innocentest Person in the World, even against all Convictions of the most undeniable Truth, and Reason. He that deliver'd me unto thee, bath the greater Sin, which does assert the Tray- Job. 19. 11. tor more a Son of Perdition, than the False Condemner himself. So highly are we oblig'd in the Words of Jacob to beseech God to keep us free from any Communion with these Instruments of Cruelty, O my Soul, come not thou into their Secret, unto their Assembly, mine honour be not thou united. Now if bare Counsel, or Assistance, can Entitle us to any Sin before its Commission, certainly.

IV. *Fourthly, We may also become Partakers of it, in Commending, Approving, Excusing, or Defending it afterward. In this Case a Man contracts the Guilt of a Prior Action, he sins by Precedent, and derives Another's Transgression upon Himself by his Assent to it. These are the Patrons, and Advocates of Satan's Court, who tho' they dare not Personally appear in the Crime, yet are his faithful Friends in the Justification of it. We may frequently observe many of the Crafty, Time-serving Politicians of this World, to act always in Publick on the Reserve and never to declare their Opinions, and Principles, to keep Mankind in suspense, and hold their Adversaries at a parry, but never fail to fall in with the Party, and close with the Victorious side, when their Interest lies sure, and open. They are content till that, to act behind the Curtain, see Others expos'd to Difficulties and Dangers, and draw the Tools in with Flatteridg Panegyries, that they may reap the Fruit of their Labours. Such Men are as much in their Thoughts, and Imaginations engag'd in the Sin, however they may fancy themselves Secure, and Innocent, in this miserable Salvo, of not being Actual, and Direct Aggressors in it. Tho' it must be confess'd to be impossible for any one to do as much with his Heart and Inclination, as he can with his Hand and Purse, yet considering the Cause which may restrain him, which perhaps is only Cowardice, Fear, of Success, or Want of Opportunity, he may become Partaker of the Guilt, by the malicious Intentions of his Mind, and the Depravation of his Will, by which the Malignity of any Crime is to be measur'd, and God will judge us at the Last Day. The Scribe's and Pharisee's Hypocritical Profession*

of their Innocency, was not sufficient to exempt them from the Imputation of their *Father's Murder*, and *Sacrilege*, whilst they retain'd and abetted their *Principles*, upon which that severe Woe is denounc'd upon them. Because ye build the Tombs of the Prophets, and

Mat. 23. 29. *Garnish the Sepulchres of the Righteous, and say, if we had been in the Days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets. Wherefore ye be Witnesses unto your selves that ye are the Children of them which kill'd the Prophets. Fill ye up then the Measure of your Fathers, ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?* If therefore we may thus by the secret Approbation of our Judgment of any Crime contract it's Guilt, certainly much more by *Commending, Excusing, Extenuating, or Defending* it, which not only *Justifies Evil*, but *Encourages*, and *Confirms* Men in the Practice of it; and has so much more Malignity in it's Nature, in that neither *Temptation*, or *Infirmity* can be pleaded in it's behalf. Nay farther, *St. John* asserts, that the very *Wish* of Success towards it, can render the *Speaker* an *Accomplice*. *If there come any unto you*

Eph. 2. 10, 11. *(says he) and bring not this Doctrine, Receive him not into your House, neither bid him God-speed; For he that biddeth him God-speed is Partaker of his evil Deeds.* Where we see that even a bare *Entertainment*, *Civil Salutation*, or a *Flattering Compliment* bestow'd upon any Person, relating to the *Vices*, or *Errors* wherein he is engag'd, *Actually* makes them *Ours*, and derives the same Guilt on our own Heads. *St. Paul* carries this *Critical Case of Conscience* even yet to an higher Extremity, and tells us, that a meer *Complacency in Other's Sin* appropriates it to us. For in his *Epistle to the Romans*, c. i. after having recounted the most horrible Catalogue of Sins, that Human Nature can be Guilty of in the utmost State of *Corruption*, he concludes all with that *Superlative Degree* of it, that last *finishing Stroke*, and (if I may be allow'd so to speak) *Hyperbole* of Iniquity, in this *Consummate and Dreadful Character*, *Who*

V. 32. *are worthy of Death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.* Thus a Man by a *Grateful Reflection* upon, and a *Wilful Propensity* to Vice, may be Guilty of all the *Mischief* and *Calamity*, all the *Villany* and *Debauchery* that was ever committed by Mankind; and by the help of a *Lively Memory*, and a *Lowd Imagination*, Spiritually act over all the most *Flagitious*, and *Heinous Impieties*, that the *Soul* is capable of *Representing*, the *Devil* of *Suggesting*, and the *United Annals of Historians Recording*. He may be the very *Reverse* of his *Blessed Saviour* (of whom he so desperately stands in need) not only *Bear*, but be positively Guilty of the *Sins of the whole World*. Thus we may partake of other Men's Crimes, by a *Phantastical Delight* in them.

V. Fifthly, we may partake in other Men's Sins, by giving Offence, on scandalous Example. As Men are Members of Society, they stand Responsible not only for the *Positive Legality* of their Actions, as consider'd in themselves, and their own Natures, solely with respect to the *Subject-Matter* of them, but also for their *Relative Consequences*, as they may affect the Consciences of Others, to which we are bound by the *Laws of Charity* to give no *Violation*, *Disturbance*, or occasion of *Transgressing*; and in all our Deportment to consult not if only it's *Lawfulness*, but it's *Decency*, and *Expediency*, with regard to our *Brethren*, against whom we may Sin, (as *St. Paul* says, in the admirable State of this Case, 1 Cor. 8. 10.) and wound their

their weak Consciences, and sin against Christ. Thus the Abuse even of an Innocent Liberty cannot be Justify'd by a good Intention, and we are liable to Answer for the Fall of those to whom we become a *Stumbling-block*, and a *Rock of Offence*. And if we are thus *Obnoxious* for the Consequences of even our *Lawful Actions*, how much higher will the *Obligation* rise in the *Ill Effects* of those that are really in themselves *Unlawful*? Here we propagate our *Malignity*, spread our *Infection* like a *Walking Pestilence*, communicate our *poisonous Influence* to all about us, and transgress as 'twere, by *Proxy*. *Number* and *Example* carry a much more *Controlling Evidence*, than the *Demonstrations* of *Reason* and *Argument*. For these are visible to the *Eye*, and strike quicker and deeper upon the *Imagination*, than *Principles* and *Speculations* upon the *Understanding*; which is *deceiv'd*, and hurry'd away with the desire of *Imitation*, and is apt to deduce, and frame *Rules* by *Examples*, instead of *Examples* by *Rules*; especially where they fall in with the corrupted *Inclinations* of *Nature*, and have the Advantage of being well *Recommended*, they scarce fail to *shock* the most constant *Virtue*, to confirm those that are already in a vicious *Course*, and pervert weak and unstable Persons into *Sin* and *Error*, who have not their *Senses* exercis'd, to discern betwixt *Good*, and *Evil*. And thus, whether we follow, or lead Others, we both ways become *Partakers* of their *Sins*. In the first Case the *Temptation* is very strong, and without *God's preventing Gracia*, almost *Irresistible*: For a Man must have a steady *Government* over *Himself*, and his *Passions*, together with an *Inflexible Eye* fix'd on his *Duty*, and an unshaken *Contempt* of the *World*, and its *Flatteries*, and *Censures*, he must be stanch in his *Resolutions*, and *Master* of his *Conduct*, neither to be *Corrupted* by *Shame*, *Hopes*, or *Fears*, that is not born down in a *Throng*, and sunk in the *Tide* of *Popular Authority*. For when once *Vice* gets into *Fashion*, it makes *Religion* look *Singular*, and *Uncredible*. On the other hand, let but a *Man of Figure*, and *Character*, of *Interest* and *Quality*, lead the way, how many *implicit*, and *sawning* *Profelytes* will follow the *Temporizing Courtier*, like *Beasts* in a *Track*, with a refin'd *Understanding* to give up their *Creed*, abandon their *Old Friends*, with their unprofitable *Principles*, *Care* for their most *implacable Enemies*, and *Betray* and *Sacrifice* both *Church* and *State* to their insatiable *Lust*, *Pride*, *Avarice*, and *Ambition*! Such a Man, like *Lucifer*, must fall with, and *Damn* his *Legions*, and like him too, be accountable for all the *Villany*, *Treachery*, and *Rebellion*, into which his *Hellish Example* seduc'd them.

VI. Lastly, We may be *Partakers* of other Men's *Sins*, by *Authorizing*, *Propagating*, or *Publishing* any *Heresy*, *False Doctrine*, *Schism*, *Faction*, *Irreligion*, or *Immorality*. For these *Corrupt* and *Debauch* Men's *Minds*; and consequently *Influence*, and *Pervert* their *Lives*. For 'tis very rarely seen, that wicked *Principles* lie still, and *dormant* in the *Conscience*, and not exert and shew themselves in *Action*: And he that *lays* the *Poyson* is the Cause of his *Death* who *swallows* it. He that puts a *Cheat*, and *Lye* upon another, leads him *Hoodwinkt* into *Falshood*, and *Mistake*; and when once a Man is got into *Error*, he goes *Headlong*, and *Blindfold* into *Perdition*. There is a strange *Insatiation*, and as 'twere sort of *Witchcraft* in *False Doctrine*, that unaccountably *besoits*, and *stupifies* the *Reason*; and scarce was there ever any *Breach'd*, however *Impious*, or *Absurd*, but found some *Patrons* and *Profelytes*, to *Believe*, and *Maintain* it. Are not therefore all the vile *Enormities*, that are the *Natural Product* of *Wild*, *Licentious*, and *Enthusiastick Opinions*, to be charg'd back upon the *Original Author*, in whom

whom they must all Center, and Conterminate, as in that Root of Bitterness from whence they sprung? *Heterodoxy*, and *Blasphemy*, *Lewdness*, and *Prophaneness*, are of such a Black, and Frightful Complexion in themselves, that represented in their Native Deformity, they would gain few *Votaries* in the World: Therefore these *Spiritual Panders* in Iniquity cover the odious Monster with Artificial *Guises*, and *Dissembl'd Colours*, to make it look Amiable, and Engaging. And when *Sophistry*, and *False Wit* cloath the Fallacy, they easily Seduce, and Beguile the Ignorant, and Vicious; and Men are oftentimes tempted to swallow that Diet for the Sauce, which they would otherwise Loath, and Nauseate. When the *Directors of Men's Consciences* turn *Impostors*, and Betray, and Mislead them into those Sins they should teach them to avoid, such Pernicious *Infidelity* to their Sacred Office, ought justly to Entitle them, to all those repeated Woes, denounc'd by God and Christ against those *False Prophets*, and *Pharisaical Doctors*, who perverted the Divine Law, and made even the Blessed Word of God, the sad Instrument of Damnation to Mankind.

Thus in all these Instances, we see there is an Union, or as 'twere Confederacy in Vice, it joyns hand in hand, and draws out into Leagues, and Combinations; it's Contagion spreads like a Leprosy; there's no Breathing in its Air with Safety; we cannot look on it without endangering our Health and Innocence, nor touch it without Uncleaness and Pollution. In all these Cases there is a Communication of Guilt both Backward, and Forward, whereby we become Partakers of other Men's Sins. In the Commander, Parent, or Governor, it Recoils upon the Person in Authority, basely Abusing his Power, Prostituting the Vice-Gerency of God to execrable Purposes, Betraying his Sacred Trust, and Commission, and Violating his Faith and Honour, in Conniving at, Consenting to, or Concealing those Impieties, we ought to Punish, Prevent, or Restrain, we are positively Accessory to their Commission, by a Tacit Approbation and a Conscious, and Cowardly Forbearance. By administering Counsel, Direction, or Assistance towards them, we act the Part of the Tempter himself, instigating Evil, and promoting the Kingdom of Darkness, and Destruction of our Fellow Creatures. In Commending, Approving, or Defending any Crime, we appropriate it to our selves, Transgress at second hand, become the Guardians of Iniquity, and commence the Devil's Champions, to fight his Battels, and maintain his Cause, and represent him in the most detestable Quality of his Nature, a Delight in the Dishonour of God, and the Misery, and Ruin of Mankind. In giving Offence by our Actions, we use our Liberty for a Cloak of Maliciousness, and make what would be otherwise Innocent, Culpable. By a scandalous Life, and Example, we derive a Reproach upon our Holy Profession, and must answer for those that are seduc'd by it's baseful and infectious Influence. By Instilling, or Propagating *Heterodox*, *Schismatical*, *Atheistical* Factions, or Immoral Principles into others, we turn meer Anti-Christis, and Emisaries of Hell, and must answer for all the Souls that perish thro' our Treachery, Guilt or Delusion.

Give me now leave very Briefly, and by way of Application of this whole Discourse, to urge One or Two particular Motives to deter us from falling under this great and dangerous Guilt of Partaking in Other Men's Sins.

1. The First may be drawn from the Consideration of that heavy Burthen of Guilt, which lies upon every Man's own Conscience, too Great to need the Additional Weight of Others. That in it self (God knows) is enough

enough to sink us, without his Infinite Mercy, and the All-atoning Merits of our Saviour. Now if the Malignity but of the least, single Transgression, without that, can consign us over to Eternal Pardon, if as the Scriptures, and our own wretched Experience convince us, that even a Just Man falls seven times a Day, what a Fearful Reckoning is he like to make, who besides his own immense Sum, almost without Number, or Bounds, stands Chargable for such a long, and frightful Catalogue of Other Men's Sins? Can he by any Means (to use the Elegant Expression of the Psalmist) Redeem his Brother, or give to God a Ransom for his Soul, that he has thus plung'd into Misery, and seduc'd into Ruin? Can he be a Mediator for Another, that so much wants the Intercession of One for Himself? And if the Righteous can scarcely be sav'd, where shall this Ungodly, this Over-grown, this Exorbitant Sinner, laden with Iniquity, appear? Therefore,

2. Secondly, The vast Extent, and Duration, with the infinite, lamentable Consequences of this Method of Sinning, should Caution, and Deter us from falling into it. All other Crimes lie under some Limitation; they are at an End, or Die with the Man: But here a Man's Sin survives his Funeral; and even when he is Dead, he Sinneeth. He that Propagates, or Publishes any pernicious Writings, or Tenets, knows not how far their Poyson will reach, or where the Deadly Contagion will stop. It is an Epidemical Evil, a National Calamity, an Everlasting Plague, that has slain it's Thousands, and it's ten Thousands, that in the Hands of that Destroying Angel, the Devil, can raint whole Families, and Kingdoms, and transmit it's Venom down to Posterity, and continue Spiritual Death to the End of the World. How do those Execrable Miscreants, Arrins, and Socinus, tho' so many Years Rotten in their Graves, still stink above Ground, and live agen in an Hellish Transmigration of their Damnable Blasphemies, and Heresies! How do they now Crucifie the Son of God afresh, make him Die daily, and put him to an open, and continu'd Shame! How do those Atheistical Monsters, Hobbes, and Spinoza, in their Accursed Books, and Profelytes, still deny the God that Made them, and annul the Covenant, whereby we are Seal'd unto the day of Redemption! What a Magazine of Sin, what an Inexhaustible Fund of Debauchery, and Destruction, does any Author of Heresie, Schism, or Immorality set up! Which tho' perhaps they may appear at first as Trifling, and Inconsiderable, will like Elisha's Cloud, from being no bigger than a Man's Hand, gradually increase, till they fill the Heavens with Darkness, Thunder, and Tempest. Who would have thought, Threescore Years ago, that the Romantick, and silly Enthusiasms, of such an Illeterate, and Scandalous Wretch as Fox, should in the small Compass even of our Memory gain such mighty Ground, Captivate so many Fools, and Damn 'em with Diabolical Inspiration, and Non-sensical Cant? Or to go higher, Who would have imagin'd that Two or Three Jesuits in Masquerade crept into a Conventicle, should sow those Schismatical Seeds of Faction, and Rebellion, that in a few Years should rise to that Prodigious Degree, as to be able to grasp the Crown, contend with the Scepter, and not only Threaten, but Accomplish the Downfal both of Church and State? But how were these Numbers rais'd, and this Mischief with such amazing Success carry'd on? Was it not by many Wild, Laxitudinarian, Extravagant Opinions, and Bewitching False Doctrines, the Impudent Clamours, the Lying Misrepresentations, the Scandalous, and False Libels, both upon the King, and the Church, that every Day were Trumpeted out

of the Pulpit, and the Press, those Mints of Atheism, and Irreligion, that then Poyson'd the Nation, and Besotted it into its own Ruin? And are not the same Hands at work agen, and the same Villainous Methods pursu'd? Were ever such Outrageous Blasphemies against God, and all Religion, Natural, as well as Reveal'd, vented Publickly with Impunity, in any Christian Church, or Kingdom in the whole World, as at present in our own? (be it spoken to our Shame, and if not remedy'd, to our Confusion) for if they fail of the same Effect, not to Embroil us agen in Blood, and Ruin, it can be owing to nothing but God's Infinite, but Unmerited Mercy, and Long-Suffering, that we are not utterly Consum'd.

Lastly, This manner of Sinning ought with a more peculiar Diligence to be avoided because 'tis what without the Super-Natural Assistance of the Divine Grace, we can never Repent of, and for which consequently we can never be Forgiven. All Sin intail Damnation upon the Offender, but this almost with an inevitable Necessity. For besides that before we can arrive to this sad Degree of Impiety, we must quite have Extinguish'd the Light of our Consciences, and the Power of God's Spirit upon them, it happens, First, that we can have no thorough Knowledge of the Extent of this Sin, it being Communicated so unsuspectedly, and at such a Distance. And, Secondly, that it is a Crime, for the Injury whereof we can never make Reparation, or Restitution to the Person seduc'd into it, and consequently obtain no Compleat, and Acceptable Repentance for it's Guilt. And tho' it could be suppos'd, that we should Repent of it Ourselves, yet the Unhappy Persons we have Betray'd, may be either so firmly settled in their Errors, as to be incapable of Conviction, or gon into an Unchangeable State, and so out of the Reach of being Reclaim'd. Certainly, if there be any Sin in the World, that does more eminently carry the Image, and Superscription of the Devil upon it, it is this, and what will infallibly inherit his severest Punishments. If there are Different Degrees of Glory in Heaven, as the Apostle tells us, and by Analogy we may conclude, that there are different Degrees of Torment in Hell, according to the Size, and Quality of the Offender, no Mansion in that Dismal Place will be too Bad for such Excessive and Abominable Criminals; where were they to meet no other Aggravation to their Misery, but that of Beholding, and Conversing with so many Wretched Objects, whom they brought into that Place of Torment, it would beat the Furnace seven times hotter, add Fury to Hell Flames, and a Double Weight to their Damnation. Now from this Tremendous Sin, which no Good Man can think of, without Horrour, or speak of, without Trembling,

Good Lord Deliver Us.

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